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AUTHOR Mihlbauer, Therese C.; Helms, Janet E.
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ABSTRACT

Clients have preferences regarding desired counselor characteristics and these preferences may influence counseling outcome. One factor that may influence reaction to a counselor is the counselor's gender. A combination of direct and indirect methods for eliciting preferences was used to examine preference for sex of counselor and to determine if preference is related to students' views of problems as being gender-related. Male (N=60) and female (N=60) college students were assigned to either a male or female counselor description condition. As an indirect measure, subjects read and responded to scenarios describing problems chosen as typically female, typically male, and not gender-related. As a direct measure, subjects indicated for each of 75 problems whether they would prefer to discuss it with a male counselor, female counselor, or if they had no preference. Two open-ended questions on counselor preference were also used. Results indicated that, regardless of measure used or presenting problem, subjects had no definite preference for sex of counselor except when they were forced to choose, in which case, both females and males tended to prefer a female counselor. (NRB)

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EFFECT OF TYPE OF PROBLEM AND TYPE OF ANALOGUE ON PREFERENCE FOR COUNSELOR'S SEX

THERESE C. MIHLBAUER AND JANET E. HELMS

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY AT CARBONDALE

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EFFECT OF TYPE OF PROBLEM AND TYPE OF ANALOGUE ON PREFERENCE FOR COUNSELOR'S SEX

For more than a decade, counseling researchers have recognized that clients have preferences regarding desired counselor characteristics and that these preferences may influence counseling outcome. From his review of the literature on client preferences, Rosen (1967) specualated that such preferences could affect the counseling process as well as subsequent evaluations of the counselor(s). In support of Rosen's contention, Ziemelis (1974) found that matching clients with more preferred or less preferred counselors did have slight (but reliable) effects on client and counselor evaluation of the counseling process and outcome. Furthermore, he found that subjects receiving more preferred counselors rated their counselors as being more comfortable and at ease during interviews than did subjects who received less preferred counselors even though neither group was given any expectancy induction.

One factor that may influence a person's reaction to the counselor is the counselor's gender. Although various researchers have investigated client and quasi-client preferences for sex of counselor (e.g., Koile & Bird, 1956; Fuller, 1964; Boulware & Holmes, 1970), they have often found contradictory results which may, in part, be explained by methodological differences. Such differences include (a) the manner in which problem type has been defined, (b) whether or not subjects have been allowed to indicate that they had no counselor gender preference, and (c) varying methods used for eliciting counselor preference.

Problem type typically has been defined in two ways, either via a pre-existing problem check list or by way of variously defined general problem categories. In the few studies in which a pre-existing checklist was used (Koile & Bird, 1956; Mezzano, 1971), subjects have been

asked to indicate whether they preferred women or men counselors for each of the specific problems listed. In the majority of gender preference studies, investigators have used the second strategy for defining problem types (Fuller, 1964; Boulware & Holmes, 1970; Simons & Helms, 1976). Boulware & Holmes (1970) gave subjects a general definition and case history of either a personal or a vocational problem. Simons and Helms (1976) instructed subjects to imagine that they had come into a counseling center to discuss a personal problem. Fuller (1964) did not describe the questionnaire from which statements regarding sex of person preferred for help with a vocational and a personal problem were obtained. Fuller (1964) and Boulware and Holmes (1970) were in agreement in finding that both males and females preferred male counselors more often than female counselors. However, Simons and Helms (1976) found college and non-college women preferred female counselors to male counselors on a number of hypothetical process measures.

Another methodological difference among the various counselor preference studies has been whether or not investigators have included "no preference" among the options from which subjects were expected to select. Both Fuller (1964) and Koile and Bird (1956) found that when subjects were given the option of stating no preference, the choice of no preference varied with sex of subject and presenting problem. Fuller (1964) found that males were more likely to have a definite counselor gender preference for a personal problem than for a vocational problem. The same trend was evident among females, but the required level of significance was not reached. Koile and Bird (1956) concluded women were more likely than men to say that they had no counselor gender preference. Mezzano (1971) did not include a no preference option.

When examining the different methods used to elicit subjects' preferences, in general they can be described as either direct or indirect techniques. When preferences have been elicited directly, subjects have been asked if they have a preference for a woman counselor, a man counselor, or no preference (in some cases). Problem(s) in such instances have been specified in one of the various ways previously discussed (e.g., Koile & Bird, 1956; Fuller, 1964; Mezzano, 1971). Using a direct measure, subjects' responses to the Mooney Problem checklist, Koile and Bird (1956), for instance, found that both freshmen female and male subjects most often preferred a same sex counselor, whereas Mezzano (1971) found that seventh through twelfth grade boys and girls preferred male counselors in a majority of problem areas. Similarly, Fuller (1964) concluded that when asked what sex of counselor they would prefer for help with a vocational or a personal problem, both male and female university students (as well as self-referred counseling center clients) preferred male counselors. In another study, Chesler (1971) found that when middle income clinic clients requested a counselor specifically by sex both women and men more frequently requested a male counselor. Thus, in cases where direct measures have been used, men and women have tended to prefer male counselors.

In contrast to studies in which preferences have been directly elicited, Boulware and Holmes (1970) obtained undergraduates expectancies and preferences for counselors sex and age in an indirect manner. After subjects were given definitions and case histories of either a personal or a vocational problem they were asked to imagine taking these problems to counselors pictured in slides. From subjects preference ratings (i.e., the responses to the question, How much would you like to talk to each of these persons if you had a personal [or vocational] problem?), Boulware

and Holmes (1970) inferred that males preferred male counselors for both problem types whereas females preferred female counselors for personal problems and male counselors for vocational problems. More recently, Simons and Helms (1976) used a similar methodology, but with college and non-college women evaluated the pictured female counselors more positively than the male counselors when imagining that they were about to discuss a personal problem with them. In contrast to those results obtained when direct measures were used, the results from indirect measures suggest that women counselors are preferred in some situations. Hence, it is difficult to reach any conclusions about the circumstances under which counselor gender preferences exist, if indeed they do, because one has to compare results from studies which differ widely in methodology.

Another way to examine the variables that contribute to counselor preferences is to consider that college students may view counseling problem areas as being characteristic of females, characteristic of males, or equally characteristic of both females and males (Ginn, 1975), i.e., gender-linked. Ginn found when subjects rated 75 problems on a 7 point continuum ranging from exclusively a male problem to exclusively a female problem, that 35 problems were perceived as being more typical of females, 16 were perceived as more typical of males, and 22 were perceived as equally likely to be presented at a counseling center by females as well as males.

The purpose of this research was to re-examine preferences for sex of counselor using a combination of direct and indirect methods for eliciting preferences and to determine if preference was related to students' views of problems as being gender related. It was hypothesized that females and males would prefer to take experimenter determined "female" problems to female counselors, "male" problems to male counselors, and

that for "neutral" problems they would have no counselor gender preference.

Method

Subjects

Subjects volunteered to participate in the research by signing up on a sheet accessible to all introductory psychology students. Four groups, each consisting of 15 female and 15 male subjects, were randomly assigned to either a female or a male counselor description condition. In both the male and female counselor conditions there were equal numbers of female and male subjects. A total of 60 females and 60 males participated in the research.

Counselor Descriptions

A brief written description of a hypothetical counseling psychologist was designed to present the sex of counselor variable in an unobtrusive manner. The description was as follows:

Dr. Michelle/Michael Myers has been working at a counseling center at a large university for three years. Her/his research interests include program evaluation and crisis intervention. In her/his spare time she/he enjoys reading and camping. She/he finds working with college students personally satisfying.

Instuments

Indirect Measure. Problem type was defined in accordance with Ginn's (1975) research. One problem was selected from each of his three categories: typically female, typically male, and equally female and male. The typically female problem chosen was "too easily moved to tears." The problem representing the equally female/male category was "lacking self-confidence." The typically male problem was "having angry, hostile feelings toward others."

These three problems were chosen for several reasons. First of all, previous research (Ginn, 1975) had shown that the male and female estimates on the gender-relatedness for each problem were nearly equal. Furthermore, these problems were frequently presented, and nearly equally as often, by female and male clients. In addition, all three problems were concerned with emotional issues.

For the indirect measure the three problems were developed into scenarios. For example, the typically female problem was developed into the following scenario:

This person has come into the counseling center because she/he cries too easily. In discussing the problem with the counselor she/he reported that she/he finds herself/himself crying when she/he is happy, angry, depressed, disappointed or lonely. When she/he cries she/he has noticed others become very uncomfortable. She/he often feels angry at herself/himself for not being able to stop the tears from coming. She/he finds being moved to tears so easily an embarassing and frustrating problem and want help in trying to change the situation.

Subjects received the form of the scenarios with the appropriate pronouns for their sex. The following six questions accompanied each scenario: (a) Would you like to talk about this problem with the counselor described? (b) Would you feel comfortable talking with this counselor about this problem? (c) Would you feel you could discuss anything you wished with this counselor in this situation? (d) Would you feel like this counselor could understand your problem as described above? (e) Would you like this counselor as a counselor in this situation? and (f) Would you like this counselor as a person in this situation? Subjects responded to these questions using a 7 point scale ranging from a negative evaluation of the counselor (1) to a positive evaluation of

of the counselor (7).

After collecting the data, coefficient alphas were computed for the six counselor reaction items for each of the three problem types. The obtained alphas were .92, .84, and .82 for the male, neutral, and female problems respectively. These results were high enough to justify adding the six items and using the sum as a single dependent measure.

Direct Measures

The first direct measure was the 75 item problem list used in previous research by Ginn (1975). Subjects were asked to indicate for each problem if they would prefer to discuss it with a female counselor, a male counselor, or if they had no preference. The second direct measure was subjects' response to the two open-ended questions: (a) Describe the person to whom you typically go for help with your problems, and (b) If you wanted to see a counselor and you had to choose between a female or a male counselor, which would you choose and why?

Procedure

For the indirect measure subjects read a female or male counselor description and were asked to imagine the counselor and to imagine that they were the client in each of three successive scenarios. Subjects responded to the typically female problem scenario first, followed by the neutral problem scenario, and finally the typically male problem scenario. Following each problem scenario were the six counselor evaluation items to which they responded.

Immediately following these 18 questions subjects were given the first direct measure, the 75 item problem list. Next, they rated the three problem scenarios using Ginn's (1975) gender-relatedness scale. Ratings on the scenarios were used as a manipulation check to see if subjects perceived the problems as categorized. Subjects were then given

the second direct measure, which consisted of two open-ended questions eliciting their preferences for sex of helpers and sex of counselors. The last items to which they responded were two questions designed to investigate their perceptions of the purpose of the study.

Analysis of the responses to the post experimental inquiry indicated that none of the subjects was aware of the fact that counselor gender preferences were being examined in relationship to the perceptions of problems as gender-related.

Results

Indirect Measure

Manipulation Check for Indirect Measure. Males and females differed significantly in their perceptions of the gender-relatedness of all three scenarios. The obtained means and standard deviations for female subjects for the presumably female problem were M = 1.98, SD = .77; for the male problem they were M = 4.12, SD = .85 and for the neutral problem they were M = 3.78, SD = .76. For male subjects the obtained means and standard deviations were M = 2.46, SD = 1.06, M = 4.81, SD = 1.25, and M = 4.12, SD = 1.05 for the female, male and neutral problems, respectively.

To determine how subjects perceived the three problem scenarios, *t*-tests were computed between mean ratings for each problem and "4" (equally typical of females and males). Data obtained from female and male subjects were analyzed separately. The means obtained from the male sample differed significantly from neutral for the female ($t(58) = 11.05$, $p < .01$) and the male scenarios ($t=(58) = 4.94$, $p < .01$), but not for the neutral one ($t(58) = .87$). Thus, males perceived all three problems as intended.

However, females perceived the "neutral" problem, lacking self-confidence as being more typical of females ($t(59) = 2.22$, $p < .05$) and the "male"

problem, having angry, hostile feelings toward others, as equally typical of either females or males ($t(59) = 1.08$, $p > .05$). Females perceived the "female" problem, too easily moved to tears, as intended ($t(59) = 20.12$, $p < .01$). Hence, the manipulation check suggested that males and females differ in the way that they stereotype problems.

Analysis of Problem Types and Counselor Preferences. A 22.3 split-plot analysis of variance was used to determine the effects of sex of client, sex of counselor and problem type (female, neutral, and male). The dependent variable for the indirect measure was the sum of the six reaction to counselor items for each of the problem scenarios. Scheffe's (1959) test was used for the post hoc analyses of significant results.

The main effect for problem type was significant ($F(2,232) = 19.05$, $p < .001$) indicating that subjects evaluated the described counselor more positively when they were reacting to the neutral problem ($M = 32.15$, $SD = 2.36$) than when reacting to the female ($M = 29.29$, $SD = .50$) or the male problem ($M = 27.92$, $SD = 1.86$).

Empirical support for the hypothesis would have consisted of a significant sex of counselor X sex of problem type interaction such that both females and males preferred female counselors for predesignated female problems and male counselors for predesignated male problems. However, the sex of counselor X problem type interaction was not significant ($F(2,232 = 1.24$, $p > ,05$). Although the hypothesis was not confirmed using a combined sample, it seems plausible that due to the sex differences in perceptions of the problems as gender-related, that separate analysis of the sexes might yield different results. However, the sex of counselor X problem type interaction was not significant for either the female sample or the male sample and once again there was a significant

main effect due to problem type such that both samples more positively evaluated the counselor as described for the neutral problem than for either the female or male problems.

Direct Measures

As previously mentioned, the first direct measure was a list of 75 problems about each of which subjects responded whether they would prefer to talk with a man counselor, a woman counselor, of if they had no preference. The second direct measure was subjects' responses to the two open-ended questions eliciting their preferences for sex of helpers and sex of counselors.

Analysis of Problem Types and Counselor Preferences. Chi square analyses using sex of subject and sex of counselor preferred as the row and column variables were computed for each of the 75 problems. Since one purpose of the present study was to compare directly versus indirectly elicited gender preferences for counselors, the analysis of the three problems which were also used in the indirect measure were examined first. Neither the female problem, "too easily moved to tears" not the neutral problem, "lacking self-confidence" resulted in a significant Chi square (see Table I). These results indicated that counselor gender preferences were not related to problem type as predicted and substantiated the findings obtained in the indirect measure.

Insert Table I about here

For the male problem, "having angry, hostile feelings toward others" the Chi square analysis was significant ($X^2 = 7.04$, $p < .05$). Both males and females chose the no preference option more frequently. Because

TABLE I

SUMMARY OF PREFERENCES FOR COUNSELOR GENDER

FOR PROBLEMS APPEARING IN BOTH THE DIRECT AND INDIRECT MEASURE

Nature of Problem	Sex of Client	Counselor Gender Preferences[a] M vs. F		M vs. NP		F vs. NP		Significance[b] Level
Too easily	M	13	26	13	21	26	24	.07
moved to tears	F	6	22	6	32	22	32	
(Female problem)	Total	19	48	19	53	48	56	
Lacking self-	M	21	12	21	27	12	27	.73
confidence	F	17	13	17	30	13	30	
(Neutral problem)	Total	38	25	38	57	25	57	
Having angry,	M	16	17	16	27*	17	27	.03*
hostile feelings	F	5	20	5	35	20	35	
toward others	Total	21	37	21	62	37	62	
(Male problem)								

NOTE: n = 120 (60 females, 60 males)

[a] M = Males, F = Females, NP = No preference

[b] Significance levels are reported for the 2 x 3 chi-square analyses

* $p < .05$

males actually perceived this problem as more typical of males, it was erroneously hypothesized that males should prefer male counselors.

Females actually perceived this "male" problem as typical of both sexes (neutral) and, as such, it was correctly predicted that females would choose the no preference category more often than either the male or female counselor choice. Nevertheless, regardless of the type of measure used, counselor gender preferences were not consistently related to problem type for any of the three problems that appeared in both the indirect and direct measures.

For the remaining 72 problems contained in the direct measure, among those subjects who had a definite preference for sex of counselor, a same sex preference prevailed, regardless of whether the problem had been categorized by Ginn (1975) as "female", "male", or "neutral".

Insert Table II about here

However, when the number of people who chose either a female counselor or a male counselor were compared to those with no preference, the no preference option was most often chosen. The chi-square analyses are summarized in Table II.

Open Ended Questions. The open-ended nature of the two questions which were the second direct measure did not readily permit statistical analyses. Therefore, the following summary represents the authors' interpretation of subjects' responses. In response to the first question "Describe the person to whom you typically go for help with your problem...," females most often chose "girlfriend/female friend" (36.7%) and then "boyfriend/husband" (18.3%) as the people who they consulted about problems. Similarly, males reported that they most often sought help from

TABLE II

SUMMARY OF PREFERENCES FOR COUNSELOR GENDER

FOR FEMALE, MALE, AND NEUTRAL PROBLEM AREAS

Female Problems

Nature of Problem	Sex of Client	Counselor Gender Preferences[a]						Significance[b] Level
		M. vs. F.		M vs. NP		F vs. NP		
1. Insomnia	M	3	11	3	46	11	46	.75
	F	3	5	3	49	8	49	
	Total	6	19	6	95	19	95	
2. Bothered by unwanted and disturbing thoughts	M	11	11	11	37	11	37	.41
	F	7	16	7	37	16	37	
	Total	18	27	18	74	27	74	
3. Contemplating suicide	M	13	15	13	31	15	31	.53
	F	18	16	18	26	16	26	
	Total	31	31	31	57	31	57	
4. Too easily discouraged	M	19	16	19	24	16	24	.0007
	F	12	4	12	44	4	44	
	Total	31	20	31	68	20	68	
5. Feeling inferior	M	20	15	20	25	15	25	
	F	12	25	12	23	25	23	
	Total	32	40	32	48	40	48	
6. Wanting more freedom	M	11	10	11	38	10	38	.71
	F	8	12	8	40	12	40	
	Total	19	22	19	78	22	78	

Nature of Problem	Sex of Client	Counselor Preferences M. vs. F.		Gender Preferences M. vs NP		Counselor Preferences F vs. NP		Significance Level
7. Bothered by nightmares	M	6	8	6	46	8	46	.85
	F	5	10	5	45	10	45	
	Total	11	18	11	91	18	91	
8. Feel weak and exhausted much of the time	M	15	2	15	43	2	43	.0001
	F	3	15	3	42	15	42	
	Total	18	17	18	85	17	85	
9. Wanting more chance for self expression	M	6	21	6	33	21	33	.98
	F	6	22	6	32	22	32	
	Total	12	43	12	65	43	65	
10. Having a troubled or guilty conscience	M	13	15	13	32	15	32	.31
	F	7	19	7	34	19	34	
	Total	20	34	20	66	34	66	
11. Feeling that no one understands me	M	7	30	7	23	30	23	.25
	F	9	21	9	30	21	30	
	Total	16	51	16	53	51	53	
12. Having feelings of extreme loneliness	M	6	34	6	20	34	20	.20
	F	11	25	11	24	25	24	
	Total	17	59	17	44	59	44	
13. Lacking privacy in living quarters	M	19	7	19	34	7	34	.00
	F	1	25	1	34	25	34	
	Total	20	32	20	68	32	68	
14. Boyfriend-girlfriend problem	M	11	31	11	18	31	18	.74
	F	8	32	8	20	32	20	
	Total	19	63	19	38	63	38	

Nature of Problem	Sex of Client	Counselor Preferences M. vs. F.		Gender Preferences M vs. NP		Gender Preferences F vs. NP		Significance Level
15. Often feel	M	11	1	11	48	1	48	.0001
nauseous	F	3	16	3	41	16	41	
	Total	14	17	14	89	17	89	
16. Nervousness	M	11	6	11	42	6	42	.14
	F	8	14	8	38	14	38	
	Total	19	20	19	80	20	80	
17. Not meeting	M	11	32	11	16	32	16	.63
anyone I'd	F	8	32	8	20	32	20	
like to date	Total	19	64	19	36	64	36	
18. Frequent	M	7	3	7	50	3	50	.14
headaches	F	3	8	3	49	8	49	
	Total	10	11	10	99	11	99	
19. Too easily	M	21	3	21	35	3	35	.002
led by	F	8	13	8	39	13	39	
others	Total	29	16	29	74	16	74	
20. Overeating	M	9	5	9	46	5	46	.00
	F	5	29	5	26	29	26	
	Total	14	34	14	72	34	72	
21. Easily and	M	7	22	7	31	22	31	.93
frequently	F	7	24	7	29	24	29	
become de-	Total	14	46	14	60	46	60	
pressed								
22. Disappointment	M	10	38	10	11	38	11	.58
in a love	F	13	33	13	14	33	14	
affair	Total	23	71	23	25	71	25	

Nature of Problem	Sex of Client	Counselor Preferences M. vs. F.		Gender Preferences M vs. NP		Preferences F vs. NP		Significance Level
23. Often experience feelings of panic	M	18	4	18	37	4	37	.06
	F	11	12	11	37	12	37	
	Total	29	16	29	74	16	74	
24. Afraid of things I know I should not be	M	18	10	18	31	10	31	.41
	F	12	11	12	37	11	37	
	Total	30	21	30	68	21	68	
25. Worry about the possibility of hurting others	M	7	20	7	32	20	32	.34
	F	3	19	3	38	19	38	
	Total	10	39	10	70	39	70	
26. Moodiness "having the blues"	M	4	22	4	33	22	33	.07
	F	13	20	13	27	20	27	
	Total	17	42	17	60	42	60	
27. Wanting love and affection	M	2	46	2	10	46	10	.003
	F	14	33	14	13	33	13	
	Total	16	79	16	23	79	23	
28. Being talked about or watched	M	10	10	10	40	10	40	.06
	F	6	21	6	33	21	33	
	Total	16	31	16	73	31	73	
29. Wondering if I'll ever find a suitable mate	M	9	32	9	17	32	17	.90
	F	11	33	11	16	33	16	
	Total	20	65	20	33	65	33	

Nature of Problem	Sex of Client	Counselor Preferences M vs F		Gender Preferences M vs NP		Counselor Gender Preferences F vs NP		Significance Level
30. Can't forget an unpleasant experience	M	9	9	9	40	9	40	.12
	F	7	19	7	34	19	34	
	Total	16	28	16	74	28	74	
31. Not very attractive physically	M	22	24	22	14	24	14	.11
	F	12	33	12	15	33	15	
	Total	34	57	34	29	57	29	
32. Worry about unimportant things	M	7	3	7	49	3	49	.60
	F	7	6	7	47	6	47	
	Total	14	9	14	96	9	96	
33. Too inhibited in sexual matters	M	22	19	22	18	19	18	.0001
	F	6	41	6	13	41	13	
	Total	28	60	28	31	60	31	
34. Feelings too easily hurt	M	8	26	8	24	26	24	.33
	F	6	21	6	33	21	33	
	Total	14	47	14	57	47	57	
35. Too easily moved to tears	M	13	26	13	21	26	24	.07
	F	6	22	6	32	22	32	
	Total	19	48	19	53	48	53	
			Neutral Problems					
1. Sometimes acting childish or immature	M	25	18	25	17	18	17	.002
	F	8	28	8	24	28	24	
	Total	33	46	33	41	46	41	

Nature of Problem	Sex of Client	Counselor Preferences M vs F		Gender Preferences M vs NP		Preferences F vs NP		Significance Level
2. Feel I'm a complete blank: don't know what to do	M	15	13	15	32	13	32	.16
	F	8	20	8	31	20	31	
	Total	23	33	23	63	33	63	
3. Difficulty with marriage	M	16	24	16	20	24	20	.76
	F	14	28	14	18	28	18	
	Total	30	52	30	38	52	38	
4. Undecided major	M	13	5	13	42	5	42	.46
	F	10	9	10	41	9	41	
	Total	23	14	23	83	14	83	
5. Ill at ease with other people	M	7	16	7	37	16	37	.16
	F	14	18	14	28	18	28	
	Total	21	34	21	65	34	65	
6. Too self-centered	M	9	17	9	33	17	33	.41
	F	14	19	14	27	19	27	
	Total	23	36	23	60	36	60	
7. Have no close friends	M	5	27	5	28	27	28	.12
	F	7	36	7	17	36	17	
	Total	12	63	12	45	63	45	
8. Sometimes bothered by thoughts or insanity	M	21	4	21	35	4	35	.09
	F	16	12	16	32	12	32	
	Total	37	16	37	67	16	67	

Nature of Problem	Sex of Client	Counselor Preferences M vs F		Gender Preferences M vs NP		Preferences F vs NP		Significance Level
9. Hearing or seeing unusual things	M	17	5	17	38	5	38	.63
	F	13	7	13	40	7	40	
	Total	30	12	30	78	12	78	
10. Afraid of making mistakes	M	16	8	16	36	8	36	.29
	F	9	10	9	41	10	41	
	Total	25	18	25	77	18	77	
11. Wanting to improve my mind	M	10	4	10	46	4	46	.63
	F	9	7	9	44	7	44	
	Total	19	11	19	90	11	90	
12. Not getting along with member of my family	M	6	22	6	32	22	32	.06
	F	5	11	5	44	11	44	
	Total	11	33	11	76	33	76	
13. Being criticized by my parents	M	5	10	5	45	10	45	.97
	F	5	11	5	44	11	44	
	Total	10	21	10	89	21	89	
14. Lacking self-confidence	M	21	12	21	27	12	27	.73
	F	17	13	17	30	13	30	
	Total	38	25	38	57	25	57	
15. Confused in some of my religious beliefs	M	17	3	17	40	3	40	.17
	F	11	8	11	41	8	41	
	Total	28	11	28	81	11	81	

Nature of Problem	Sex of Client	Counselor Gender Preferences M vs F		Counselor Gender Preferences M vs NP		Counselor Gender Preferences M vs NP		Significance Level
16. Pretending to be something I'm not	M	19	9	19	32	9	32	.0003
	F	5	26	5	29	26	29	
	Total	24	35	24	61	35	61	
17. Not being the kind of person I should be	M	15	15	15	30	15	30	.04
	F	5	22	5	33	22	33	
	Total	20	37	20	63	37	63	
18. Fearful of close relationships with others	M	4	31	4	2[illegible]	31	25	.03
	F	14	23	14	[illegible]3	23	23	
	Total	18	54	18	48	54	48	
19. Fearful of and avoid member of the opposite sex	M	25	27	25	8	27	8	.49
	F	19	33	19	8	33	8	
	Total	44	60	44	16	60	16	
20. Find it hard to talk about things	M	11	16	11	33	16	33	.74
	F	8	18	8	34	18	34	
	Total	19	34	19	67	34	67	
21. Examination panic	M	11	3	11	45	3	45	.13
	F	9	10	9	41	10	41	
	Total	20	13	20	86	13	86	
22. Hurting other peoples' feelings	M	8	21	8	31	21	31	.27
	F	9	13	9	38	13	38	
	Total	17	34	17	69	34	69	

Nature of Problem	Sex of Client	Counselor Preferences M vs F		Gender Preferences M vs NP		Counselor Gender Preferences F vs NP		Significance Level
23. Purpose of going to college not clear	M	21	0	21	39	0	39	.0001
	F	5	9	5	46	9	46	
	Total	26	9	26	85	9	85	
24. Worrying about exams	M	4	4	4	52	4	52	.80
	F	6	4	6	50	4	50	
	Total	10	8	10	102	8	102	
				Male Problems				
1. Compulsive behavior	M	13	6	13	41	6	41	.02
	F	3	11	3	46	11	46	
	Total	16	17	16	87	17	87	
2. Unable to concentrate well	M	16	0	16	44	0	44	.03
	F	7	3	7	50	3	50	
	Total	23	3	23	94	3	94	
3. Sexual needs satisfied	M	27	20	27	13	20	13	.0005
	F	8	36	8	16	36	16	
	Total	35	56	35	29	56	29	
4. Not knowing how to study effectively	M	6	4	6	50	4	50	.85
	F	8	4	8	48	4	48	
	Total	14	8	14	98	8	98	
5. Lacking self-confidence	M	25	4	25	31	4	31	.00
	F	8	21	8	31	21	31	
	Total	33	25	33	62	25	62	

Nature of Problem	Sex of Client	Counselor Preferences M vs F	Gender Preferences M vs NP		Preferences F vs NP		Significance Level
6. Doubting my masculinity or femininity	M	27	27	18	14	18	.07
	F	19	19	15	26	15	
	Total	46	46	33	40	33	
7. Needing information about occupations	M	20	20	39	1	39	.002
	F	7	7	45	8	45	
	Total	27	27	84	9	84	
8. Doubting the widsom of my vocational choice	M	14	14	46	0	46	.001
	F	6	6	44	10	44	
	Total	20	20	90	10	90	
9. Fear of failing in college	M	8	8	47	5	47	.61
	F	11	11	46	3	46	
	Total	19	19	93	8	93	
10. Not spending enough time in study	M	7	7	49	4	49	.41
	F	3	3	52	5	52	
	Total	10	10	101	9	101	
11. Losing my temper	M	25	25	28	7	28	.0002
	F	6	6	37	17	37	
	Total	31	31	65	24	65	
12. Having angry, hostile feelings toward others	M	16	16	27	17	27	.03
	F	5	5	35	20	35	
	Total	21	21	62	37	62	

Nature of Problem	Sex of Client	Counselor Preferences M vs F		Gender Preferences M vs NP		F vs NP		Significance Level
13. Financial problems	M	24	5	24	31	5	31	.008
	F	9	9	9	42	9	42	
	Total	33	14	33	73	14	73	
14. Excessive use of drugs	M	14	8	14	38	8	38	.73
	F	11	7	11	42	7	42	
	Total	25	15	25	80	15	80	
15. Afraid of unemployment after graduation	M	17	2	17	41	2	41	.007
	F	5	7	5	48	7	48	
	Total	22	9	22	89	9	89	
16. Excessive drinking	M	18	7	18	35	7	35	.32
	F	11	9	11	40	9	40	
	Total	29	16	29	75	16	75	

[a] M = Males, F = Females, NP = No preference

[b] Significance levels are reported for the 2 x 3 chi square analyses

"boyfriend/male friend" (26.7%) followed by "girlfriend/fiancee/wife" (18.3%).

In response to the second question "If you wanted to see a counselor and you had to choose between a female or a male counselor which would you choose and why?" both males and females preferred female counselors more often than male counselors. Of the female subjects, 53.3% favored a female counselor, 21.7% favored a male counselor, and 25% of the female subjects did not state a definite preference. Of the male subjects, 46.6% preferred a female counselor, 25% preferred a male counselor, and 28.4% did not state a definite preference. The reason most frequently given by females for preferring female counselors was that respondents would be more comfortable with and would be understood better by a female counselor. The reason most frequently given by males for preferring a female counselor was that they were perceived as better listeners, more compassionate, and/or easier to be comfortable around.

Discussion

Although it was theorized that males and females would prefer to take experimenter determined "female" problems to female counselors, "male" problems to male counselors, and that for "neutral" problems they would have no counselor preference, the results did not support the hypothesized relationships. In general, people did not indicate a consistent preference for counselor gender regardless of either the nature of the stimulus problem or the type of analogue, i.e., direct or indirect, used to elicit those preferences.

The failure to find a definite preference for male counselors is at odds with much of the previous gender-preference literature and suggests that people's perceptions of females may have undergone a favorable change. The assumption is confirmed somewhat by the finding that when forced

to choose a female or male counselor, both sexes tended to prefer a female.

Nevertheless, several methodological considerations may account for the failure to find the expected counselor sex-problem type linkage. To begin with, in designing this study, it was erroneously assumed that both females and males would perceive the three problems used in the indirect measure similarly and in a specific gender-related manner. Yet, the results of the manipulation check indicated that males and females differed in their perceptions of the gender relatedness of all three problems. Because the three problems were chosen as being representative of "female", "male", and "neutral" problems it was important though not necessary, that both sexes perceive them as such. Although males in the present study did perceive all three problems in the same manner as had Ginn's (1975) male subjects, females perceived the problems differently than had his women subjects; the "neutral" problem was evaluated as more typical of females than males and the "male" problem as equally typical of both sexes. These results suggest that women's sex-role stereotypes may be changing at a faster pace than men's.

Of further methodological concern is the possibility that the generalizability of the present study to actual counseling situations may be limited because the subjects were not actual clients. Furthermore, perhaps more valid information about students' preferences for a counselor of a particular gender would have been obtained if subjects had indicated preferences for only those problems which they were currently experiencing or had previously experienced (e.g., for which they would consider or had obtained professional help). It may be that subjects expressed no preference frequently because the problems seemed irrelevent to them and they had no investment in committing themselves to one choice or another.

Not a lot of research has been conducted concerning the impact of assigning or not assigning clients to counselors with preferred characteristics. Shullman and Letz (1979) found an overall trend for counselors to assign clients to same-sex counselors. Presumably, such assignments were due to counselor's preferences rather than clients'. It might be that the counseling process could be significantly improved if societal or professional trends were replaced as the primary guidelines for assigning clients. Ideally, further research will help clarify for which presenting problems a same-sex counselor assignment would be more beneficial to the client and/or to the counseling process.

Footnotes

This article is based on the first author's master's thesis, conducted under the direction of the second author.

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Requests for reprints should be sent to Therese C. Mihlbauer, Department of Psychology, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois 62901.

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